

Five-day Week Lunch Menu Planning Checklist for Grades K-8 Option

This checklist applies to schools and institutions that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#) and have grade configurations that prevent students from being separated into the required grade groups for K-5 and 6-8. Examples include schools where students in grades K-8 or grades 5-8 eat together during the same lunch period. **Note:** The lunch meal pattern option for grades K-8 requires a narrower calorie range and more restrictive sodium limit (see the Dietary Specifications section below).

Check (☑) “yes” or “no” to indicate if the weekly lunch menu complies with each requirement. For detailed information on the NSLP meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and review the CSDE’s guide, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*.

Lunch	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes all five components: meat/meat alternates, grains, fruits, vegetables, and milk.		
Milk	Yes	No ¹
The weekly lunch menu includes at least 1 cup of milk		
All milk offered is either unflavored or flavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free. Whole and reduced fat (2%) milk are not served		
At least two different varieties of milk are offered. If flavored milk is offered, unflavored milk is also offered.		
Fruits Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes at least ½ cup of fruit. ²		
The weekly lunch menu includes at least 2 ½ cups of fruit. ²		
If served, 100% fruit juice does not exceed half of the weekly fruits component, i.e., no more than 1 ¼ cups. Note: Indicate “NA” (not applicable) if fruit juice is not served.		
Dried fruit credits as twice the amount served, i.e., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component.		
Vegetables Component	Yes	No ¹
Each meal includes at least ¾ cup of vegetable. ²		
The weekly lunch menu includes at least 3 ¾ cups of vegetables. ²		
The weekly lunch menu meets all vegetable subgroups (3 ¾ cups total): <input type="checkbox"/> Dark Green: ½ cup dark offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Red/Orange: ¾ cup offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Beans and Peas (Legumes): ½ cup offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Starchy: ½ cup offered weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Other: ½ cup offered weekly (or dark green, red/orange, beans/peas, or starchy) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 cup of additional vegetables offered weekly to reach 3 ¾ cups total (choose from any of the five vegetable subgroups)		
If served, 100% vegetable juice does not exceed half of the weekly vegetables component, i.e., no more than 1 7/8 cups. Note: Indicate “NA” (not applicable) if vegetable juice is not served.		
Raw leafy greens credit as half of the amount served, i.e., 1 cup of lettuce or spinach as ½ cup of the vegetables component.		

Grains Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes at least 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) of grains.		
The weekly lunch menu includes 8-9 oz eq of grains. ²		
All grains are whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched. For more information, see Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP and Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP ,		
At least half of all grains offered are WGR.		
Grain-based desserts are limited to no more than 2 oz eq per week.		
Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component	Yes	No ¹
Each lunch includes at least 1 oz eq of MMA.		
The weekly lunch menu includes 9-10 oz eq of MMA. ²		
Offer versus Serve (OVS)	Yes	No ¹
Students are required to select at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable for a reimbursable meal.		
In addition to ½ cup of fruit or vegetable, students are required to select the full portion of at least two other components for a reimbursable meal.		
Dietary Specifications (Nutrient Standards) for Weekly Menus ³ (Indicate “unknown” if you do not conduct your own nutrient analysis.)	Yes	No ¹
Calories are within the allowable range of 600-650 calories.		
Saturated fat is less than 10% of total calories.		
Sodium does not exceed 1,230 milligrams. <i>This first sodium target is extended through June 30, 2024.</i>		
All nutrition labels and manufacturer specifications indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.		

¹ If “no” is checked for any of the statements above, the menu does not comply with the meal pattern requirements. Check the menu and revise accordingly.

² Larger amounts of milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates may be served only if meals do not exceed the weekly limit for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

³ Schools are not required to conduct a nutrient analysis of menus. The CSDE will conduct a nutrient analysis as part of the Administrative Review of Child Nutrition Programs.

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Menu Planning Resources

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Menu Planning Resources for School Meals: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/MenuPlanResourcesSchools.pdf>

Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Offer-versus-Serve-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Program-Guidance-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/VegSubgroup.pdf>



For more information, review the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals* and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/NSLPmenuchecklist_gradesK-8option.pdf.

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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